PRELIMINARY AMENDMENT

Prior to an examination on the merits, please amend the above captioned RCE as follows.

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend claims 25, 29, and 43 as follow:

25.   (Twice amended)   A method for steganographically protecting a digital signal comprising the steps of:

    a)   providing a carrier signal; and

    b)   using a random or pseudo-random key to steganographically encode independent information including a digital watermark into the carrier signal.

29.   (Twice amended).   A method for steganographically protecting a digital signal comprising:

    a)   providing a carrier signal that has been encoded with independent information; and

    b)   using a random or pseudo-random key to steganographically decode independent information including a digital watermark from the carrier signal.

43.   (Twice amended)   The method according to claim 42, further comprising of the step of:

    h)   using positions within [the] a sample window and a position within the input stream to index random or pseudo-random masks and compute a mapping function to determine encoding positions and encode digital watermark information into the sample window.

Please add new claims 62 and 63, as follows:

--62.   (new) The method of claim 25, wherein the step of steganographically encoding independent information into the carrier signal causes an imperceptible change in the carrier signal.